

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

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Markey, King Introduce National Cigarette Fire Safety Legislation

National Fire Safety Groups Laud Legislative Efforts to Reduce Fires

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and Rep. Peter King (R-NY), a senior member of the Financial Services Committee, introduced “the Cigarette Fire Safety Act of 2005,” a bill that will set a reasonable, national ignition standard for cigarettes. Currently, the tobacco industry produces two types of cigarettes: cigarettes which meet the New York State safety requirement for a “self-extinguishing” standard and cigarettes for the rest of the country. This bipartisan legislation introduced today will extend the protection of the New York standard to the rest of the country and help prevent an estimated 800 deaths, 2,200 injuries and nearly \$560 million dollars in damages caused by cigarette ignited fires every year.

Rep. Markey said, “It is common knowledge that smoking is one of the nation’s leading causes of preventable death, but it’s less widely known that cigarettes are also the leading cause of fatal fires. The New York law demonstrates that tobacco companies can make fire safe cigarettes. Now the Congress needs to step up to protect the lives of the rest of us in 49 other states, by making the New York standard the national standard.”

Rep. King stated, “Far too often innocent children, senior citizens, and firefighters risk their lives every day rushing into cigarette ignited fires. To prevent this and save thousands of lives, we must set a reasonable, national ignition standard for cigarettes. This legislation will do just that.”

The Cigarette Fire Safety Act of 2005 has wide support from fire fighters’ associations and other groups working on fire prevention across the country including the American Burn Association Prevention Committee, the National Volunteer Fire Council, the Trauma Foundation, the International Code Council, National Fire Protection Association and the Congressional Fire Services Institute.

A report on the impact of the New York cigarette fire safety standard conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health revealed that tobacco companies can produce cigarettes that have fire safety benefits without affecting sales.

Rep. Markey said, “The Harvard report proves that the tobacco industry has no legitimate excuse for refusing to sell these safer, self-extinguishing cigarettes nationwide. We can no longer tolerate losing one more innocent child or putting one more firefighter at risk in a fire that could have been prevented.”

For more information on Rep. Markey’s legislation to promote fire prevention out:
<http://www.house.gov/markey/>

FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATIONS AND FIRE SAFETY GROUPS COMMEND “THE CIGARETTE FIRE SAFETY ACT OF 2005”

"We believe that this bill represents an important step in reducing the number of fire deaths and injuries that occur in the United States each year. The volunteer fire and emergency services have been long-time supporters of fire-safe cigarette legislation and we look forward to working closely with Representatives King and Markey to pass this legislation in the 109th Congress."

- Chief Philip C. Stittleburg, Chairman of the National Volunteer Fire Council

"I commend Reps. Markey and King for their bold efforts to regulate and reduce the hazard of cigarette caused fires."

- Andrew McGuire, Executive Director of Trauma Foundation

"There was a fatal fire in Queens, NY recently believed to have been caused by a "bootleg" cigarette not intended for sale in NY. Had national legislation been in effect, Hiroshi Takagaka might still be alive today."

- Kevin James, Retired Supervising Fire Marshal, FDNY

"The American Burn Association strongly supports the adoption of this legislation."

- David Barillo, Chair of American Burn Association Prevention Committee

"I'll do everything I can as president of NFPA to let our national leaders know that fire-safe cigarettes will save lives. I hope you'll join me and tell your representatives in Congress how important it is that they get behind this bill now."

- James M. Shannon, President and CEO of the National Fire Protection Association

"Experience in Canada and in New York State has clearly demonstrated the efficacy of the legislation proposed by Congressmen Markey and King. Consistent with our mission of protecting America's built environment - our homes, schools and businesses - the International Code Council applauds the reintroduction and champions the passage of the Cigarette Fire Safety Act."

- James Lee Witt, CEO, International Code Council

"The best way to reduce the number of deaths caused by fire is to address the root causes. Cigarettes are the leading cause of fatal fires in the U.S. The Cigarette Fire Safety Act of 2005 would save a significant number of lives and prevent families from suffering unbearable hardships."

- Bill Webb, Executive Director of the Congressional Fire Services Institute